

Scratching and biting by kittens is commonly caused by poor play habits early on. It is very important that you do not "roughhouse" with your kitten in the manner you might use with a dog. Playing rough with your kitten will teach him that hands are toys - a lesson that will be harder to break later on.

Curing the Habit of Scratching and Biting Okay, so you didn't learn your lesson the first time around. What do you do now when a couple of pats on your cat's tummy are rewarded with bloody scratches? There are a few things you can do to distance yourself from these play attacks:

Trim His Claws

Hey, Rome wasn't built in a night, and it will take quite some time to retrain your cat. Meanwhile, you might as well protect yourself from damage.

Claw trimming should be done regularly, anyway. There is no need ever to declaw a cat because of scratching behavior.

- Use Soft Claws

(Or Soft Paws - the same product as sold by veterinarians.) Soft Claws are plastic "Nail Caps" for cats, which take the sting out of scratching and minimize damage to furniture.

- Yell "Ouch";

Don't scream it, but say "Ouch" loudly and clearly. While you have your cat's attention, slowly remove your hand from his clutches. Don't yank it away or he'll think play is on, and he'll grab it again.

- "Scruff Him";

This is one of the most effective forms of discipline of cats. It mimics the punishment given a kitten by his mother when he became unruly. Grasp him by the scruff of the neck and firmly push him down toward the floor, while saying "No!" in a firm tone of voice. Hold him in this position for only three or four seconds and release. Chances are, he'll slink away, thoroughly chastened, to bathe and recover his dignity. But he'll remember this lesson for a long time.

- Redirect His Attention

Often playful biting of hands or feet occurs simply because your cat is bored, and is looking for a play object. Give him 15 minutes of active play with an interactive toy. Da Bird is a great choice. For two years it has defended its position as the top interactive toy as well as the top overall toy in my Top Picks. Alternatively, try a laser-beam type toy that kittens can chase and pounce on, or even one of those "gloves" with very long dangling "fingers."